

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An estimated price providing apparatus comprising:
 - a storage device in which estimated prices that a dealer can offer are registered in advance for respective predetermined choices in accordance with the choices that are set in advance in association with article specifications that a manufacturer can supply;
 - customizing function for allowing a user of an information terminal to select an article of desired specifications in accordance with the predetermined choices by operations from the information terminal which is connected via a communication line to allow two-way communications; and
- 15 estimated price providing function for, when the article with the desired specifications is selected by said customizing function or when the user makes request operation at the information terminal later, calculating an estimated price when the dealer sells the article with the desired specifications by referring to the estimated prices for respective choices registered in said storage device in accordance with the desired specifications, and providing the calculated estimated price per article to the information terminal.
- 25 2. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said estimated price providing function provides the

estimated price per article with the desired specifications using an e-mail message in response to user's request operation at the information terminal after said customize function selects the article with 5 the desired specifications.

3. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein at least individual storage areas are assured on said storage device in correspondence with a plurality of dealers,

10 said customize function includes dealer select function for selecting a dealer that the user of the information terminal prefers from the plurality of dealers, and

15 said estimated price providing function provides the estimated price per article with the desired specifications by referring to the storage area of said storage device, which correspond to the dealer selected by said dealer select function.

4. The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said 20 storage device is managed by a third party different from the plurality of dealers,

said apparatus further comprises estimated price update function for allowing the dealers corresponding to individual storage areas to update storage contents 25 for respective dealers stored in the individual storage areas of said storage device, and

said estimated price providing function can refer
 to the storage area of said storage device
 corresponding to the dealer selected by said dealer
 select function upon providing the estimated price per
5 article with the desired specifications to the
 information terminal.

5. The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said
 storage function, said customize function, said dealer
 select function, and said estimated price providing
10 function are implemented by processing functions in a
 single information processing apparatus.

6. The apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said
 customize function informs of manufacturer's suggested
 retail prices registered in advance for respective
15 choices by the manufacturer in a process in which the
 user of the information terminal selects the article
 with the desired specifications, and

 said estimated price providing function provides
 the estimated price per article with the desired
20 specifications to the information terminal in response
 to user's request operation at the information terminal
 after said customize function selects the article with
 the desired specifications.

7. The apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said
25 estimated price providing function provides the
 estimated price per article with the desired
 specifications to the information terminal using an

e-mail message, in which an address that specifies the dealer as a source is set, in response to user's request operation at the information terminal after said customize function selects the article with the 5 desired specifications.

8. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said estimated price providing function provides all estimated prices per article, which were previously provided to the user, to be able to be displayed as a 10 list on the information terminal in response to a user's query request at the information terminal.

9. The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said estimated price providing function transfers an estimation request of a trade-in article to the dealer 15 selected by said dealer select function when the estimation request of the trade-in article is received from the user of the information terminal in a process for providing the estimated price per article with the desired specifications to the information terminal.

20 10. The apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising estimated price update function for permitting to update storage contents of one of storage areas individually prepared on said storage device in correspondence with the plurality of dealers in 25 response to a request from the dealer corresponding to that storage area, and denying update of the storage

contents of the storage area by another dealer which does not correspond to the storage area.

11. The apparatus according to claim 10, wherein said estimated price update function permits to browse the
5 storage contents of one of storage areas individually prepared on said storage device in correspondence with the plurality of dealers in response to a request from the dealer corresponding to that storage area, and denies browsing of the storage contents of the storage
10 area by another dealer which does not correspond to the storage area.

12. The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said estimated price update function denies update of storage contents of the storage areas individually
15 prepared on said storage device in correspondence with the plurality of dealers by the manufacturer.

13. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the article is an automobile, and
the predetermined choices which are set in
20 advance are restricted to customize a backbone that determines drive performance of the automobile as a first step, and are also restricted to select other specifications to have specifications selected in the first step as top priority in subsequent steps when the
25 user of the information terminal customizes an automobile with desired specifications by said customize function.

14. The apparatus according to claim 13, wherein said
customize function executes in turn selection of drive
system components that form a backbone of the
automobile which can be manufactured by the
5 manufacturer, and selection of wheel peripheral
components registered in advance in correspondence with
the selected drive system components.

15. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein at
least one of said storage function, said customize
10 function, and said estimated price providing function
is managed by the manufacturer.

16. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said
storage function, said customize function, and said
estimated price providing function are managed by the
15 manufacturer.

17. The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said
customize function informs of manufacturer's suggested
retail prices registered in advance for respective
choices by the manufacturer in a process in which the
20 user of the information terminal selects the article
with the desired specifications, and
said estimated price providing function provides
the estimated price per article with the desired
specifications to the information terminal in response
25 to user's request operation at the information terminal
after said customize function selects the article with
the desired specifications.

18. The apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said estimated price providing function provides all estimated prices per article, which were previously provided to the user, to be able to be displayed as a
5 list on the information terminal in response to a user's query request at the information terminal.

19. An estimated price providing apparatus characterized by comprising:

10 a storage device in which estimated prices that a dealer can offer are registered in advance for respective predetermined choices in accordance with the choices that are set in advance in association with article specifications that a manufacturer can supply;

15 customize means for allowing a user of an information terminal to select an article of desired specifications in accordance with the predetermined choices by operations from the information terminal which is connected via a communication line to allow two-way communications; and

20 estimated price providing means for, when the article with the desired specifications is selected by said customize means or when the user makes request operation at the information terminal later, calculating an estimated price when the dealer sells
25 the article with the desired specifications by referring to the estimated prices for respective choices registered in said storage device in accordance

with the desired specifications, and providing the calculated estimated price per article to the information terminal.

20. An estimated price providing system, which

5 comprises an estimated price providing apparatus and an information terminal of a user, which can make two-way communications via a communication line, wherein

said estimated price providing apparatus comprises:

10 customize function for allowing the user of said information terminal to select an article of desired specifications in accordance with predetermined choices which are set in advance in association with product specifications that a manufacturer can supply in

15 response to operation at said information terminal; and

estimated price providing function for, when the article with the desired specifications is selected by said customize function or when the user makes request operation at said information terminal later,

20 calculating an estimated price when the dealer sells the article with the desired specifications by referring to a storage device in which estimated prices that a dealer can offer are registered in advance in correspondence with the choices, and providing the

25 calculated estimated price per article to said information terminal, and

said information terminal comprises:

100-110

control function for providing a man-machine interface according to operation of said customize function to the user, and informing the estimated price per article provided by said estimated price providing 5 function.

21. The system according to claim 20, wherein at least one of said storage function, said customize function, and said estimated price providing function is managed by the manufacturer.

10 22. An estimated price providing method that uses an estimated price providing apparatus and an information terminal of a user, which can make two-way communications via a communication line, comprising:

a customize step of making said information 15 terminal access said estimated price providing apparatus, and allowing the user of said information terminal to select an article of desired specifications in accordance with predetermined choices which are set in advance in association with product specifications

20 that a manufacturer can supply in response to operation at said information terminal; and

an estimated price providing step of calculating, 25 when the article with the desired specifications is selected in the customize step or when the user makes request operation at said information terminal later, an estimated price when the dealer sells the article with the desired specifications by referring to a

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storage device in which estimated prices that a dealer can offer are registered in advance in correspondence with the choices, and providing the calculated estimated price per article to said information

5 terminal.

23. A computer program instructing a computer to operate as an estimated price providing apparatus comprising:

a storage device in which estimated prices that a dealer can offer are registered in advance for respective predetermined choices in accordance with the choices that are set in advance in association with article specifications that a manufacturer can supply;

customize function for allowing a user of an information terminal to select an article of desired specifications in accordance with the predetermined choices by operations from the information terminal which is connected via a communication line to allow two-way communications; and

estimated price providing function for, when the article with the desired specifications is selected by said customize function or when the user makes request operation at the information terminal later, calculating an estimated price when the dealer sells the article with the desired specifications by referring to the estimated prices for respective choices registered in said storage device in accordance

with the desired specifications, and providing the calculated estimated price per article to the information terminal.

24. A computer program instructing a computer to
5 implement an estimated price providing method comprising:

a customize step of making an information terminal of a user access an estimated price providing apparatus, which can make two-way communications with
10 said information terminal via a communication line, and allowing the user of said information terminal to select an article of desired specifications in accordance with predetermined choices which are set in advance in association with product specifications that
15 a manufacturer can supply in response to operation at said information terminal; and

an estimated price providing step of calculating, when the article with the desired specifications is selected in the customize step or when the user makes
20 request operation at said information terminal later, an estimated price when the dealer sells the article with the desired specifications by referring to a storage device in which estimated prices that a dealer can offer are registered in advance in correspondence
25 with the choices, and providing the calculated estimated price per article to said information terminal.

25. A computer readable storage medium storing a program code which makes a computer operate as an estimated price providing apparatus comprising:

a storage device in which estimated prices that a dealer can offer are registered in advance for respective predetermined choices in accordance with the choices that are set in advance in association with article specifications that a manufacturer can supply;

a customize function for allowing a user of an information terminal to select an article of desired specifications in accordance with the predetermined choices by operations from the information terminal which is connected via a communication line to allow two-way communications; and

an estimated price providing function for, when the article with the desired specifications is selected by said customize function or when the user makes request operation at the information terminal later, calculating an estimated price when the dealer sells the article with the desired specifications by referring to the estimated prices for respective choices registered in said storage device in accordance with the desired specifications, and providing the calculated estimated price per article to the information terminal.